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AMOSS' DERBY CONTENDER MO TOM 'VERY IMPRESSIVE' IN RETURN TO WORK TAB; VENUS VALENTINE TO WEAR BLINKERS FOR KENTUCKY OAKS

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, April 13, 2016) – G M B Racing's Mo Tom began serious preparation for a start in the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (Grade I) with a half-mile breeze in :48.40 over a fast track Wednesday morning at Churchill Downs.

Churchill Downs clockers caught the son of **Uncle Mo** in eighth-mile splits of :12.40, :24.20 and :36.20 before galloping out six furlongs in 1:14.20 and seven furlongs in 1:27.40 under exercise rider **Mario Garcia**. This was the 3-year-old colt's first breeze since finishing a troubled fourth in the March 26 Louisiana Derby (GII) behind winner **Gun Runner**.

"Mo Tom was very impressive this morning," trainer **Tom Amoss** said. "This was his first breeze since the Louisiana Derby and I think that when he's right and breezes well the things that are going to catch someone's attention are not only the breezes themselves but how much energy he has once he's crosses the wire and the gallop out. He's got a lot of energy and does a lot more."

Amoss reflected on Mo Tom's most recent start in the Louisiana Derby, where he encountered some traffic trouble skimming the rail behind a wall of horses at the top of the stretch.

"I'm not going to play the game of where we might have run if we didn't encounter the trouble that we encountered in the Louisiana Derby," Amoss said. "I'll simply tell you that my horse has a devastating late run and he's yet to be able to use it in his last two starts. I'm looking forward to getting that chance on the first Saturday in May."

Mo Tom currently sits at No. 18 on the Kentucky Derby Leaderboard with 32 points. Only two qualifying races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby remain, the Arkansas Derby (GI) at Oaklawn Park (Top 4 points: 100-40-20-10) and the Lexington (GIII) at Keeneland (10-4-2-1). Nevertheless, Amoss is not concerned with losing a spot in the Derby starting gate.

"I'm really not paying attention to it, I don't think it's an issue," Amoss said. "I'd be surprised if Monday morning we are not in the Top 20. If that indeed is the case, I'll start paying attention then. We all knew the point system in the beginning of this past year. If there were any complaints, it should have been done then. It's the system and I'll stand by whatever it does."

Amoss is unsure as to who would have the mount should his horse get into the Derby. **Corey Lanerie**, the pilot in six of the colt's seven career starts, could also have the option of riding Blue Grass Stakes (GI) third-place finisher **Cherry Wine** or Arkansas Derby contender **Unbridled Outlaw**, if either of the two qualify.

"We still have some moving parts here," Amoss said. "Corey (Lanerie) ran third in the Blue Grass with Cherry Wine and he's going down to Arkansas to ride [Unbridled Outlaw] in the Arkansas Derby. At this time we're not doing anything. We aren't putting our chips on the table yet, we're going to see what happens after this weekend and talk to Corey and see what his feelings are about the horses he's riding besides Mo Tom."

Amoss went on to say that Mo Tom would likely have two more works before the Kentucky Derby both of which, like Wednesday's breeze, would be at least a half-mile.

"You won't see Mo Tom work more than a half-mile going into the Derby," Amoss said. "When you watch his works and you see what he does past the wire, you recognize that today's work was really more a three-quarter of a mile work rather than a half-mile work."

Also on Churchill's work tab Wednesday for Amoss was **Rosemont Farm LLC's** Kentucky Oaks hopeful **Venus Valentine**, a 74-1 upset winner of the Rachel Alexandra (GII) two starts back, who breezed a half-mile in :48.60 under Garcia. She went the first quarter mile in :24.20 and galloped out five furlongs in 1:02.40.

This was the 3-year-old daughter of **Congrats'** second breeze since a fifth-place finish behind **Land Over Sea** in the Fair Grounds Oaks (GII) on Mar. 20. The four-furlong work was her first wearing blinkers, and Amoss confirmed that she will wear blinkers in the \$1 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) on May 6.

"The idea there is to put her in the game a little more early in the race because she comes from so far back," Amoss said.

Amoss acknowledges how difficult it will be to go up against undefeated champion **Songbird**.

"I think looking for a weakness in Songbird would be like looking for a weakness in the **Golden State Warriors'** basketball team this year, because I haven't seen it," he stated. "But let's not forget it is the Kentucky Oaks and you only get one chance to run in a race like that. Venus has earned a right to be in there. The mountain that she has to climb is certainly big, but she's doing well."

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